

Reply to Office Action dated June 15, 2006

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-2, 4-12, 14-17, and 19 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 10 and 15 are amended, and claims 13, 18, and 20 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. No new matter is added. Support for the claims can be found throughout the specification, including the original claims, and the drawings. Reconsideration in view of the above amendments and following remarks is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejected claims 1, 2, 4-6, 8, and 9 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Katagiri, U.S. Patent No. 5,598,607 in view of EP Application 0080979 (hereinafter "EP '979"). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 recites, *inter alia*, a plate shaped spacer inserted between the frictional member tightening planes, for supporting force exerted on the frictional member. The Office Action acknowledges that Katagiri fails to disclose or suggest such features. However, the Office Action then asserts that:

EPO '979 uses the spacer (6) to adjust the force between the tightening planes. Implementing such a space plate into Katagiri between the tightening planes would allow for adjustable tightening of the members and help apply a constant force to the shaft. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to modify Katagiri as taught by EPO '979, such that Katagiri includes a spacer plate, in order to provide an adjustable and constant tightening force to the shaft.

However, the claimed plate shaped spacer is different from bucket spring 6' disclosed by EP '979. Referring, for example, to the exemplary embodiment shown in Figures 1-5 of the present application and the corresponding disclosure, plate shaped spacer 43 prevents the destruction of frictional member 41 by keeping a predetermined gap between two frictional member tightening

Reply to Office Action dated June 15, 2006

planes 41b and thereby dispersing strong pressure exerted on the frictional member 41. See, for example, page 8, lines 7-11 of the present application. In contrast, bucket spring 6' disclosed by EP '979 generates frictional force by pressing disk 6. See page 9, lines 7-14 of EP '979. Thus, EP '979 also fails to disclose or suggest at least the claimed plate shaped spacer, and thus it would not have been obvious to modify Katagiri in view of EP '979 as suggested by the examiner to produce the claimed invention of independent claim 1.

Accordingly, the rejection of independent claim 1 over Katagiri and EP '979 should be withdrawn. Dependent claims 2, 4-6, and 8-9 are allowable over Katagiri at least for the reasons discussed above with respect to independent claim 1, from which they depend, as well as for their added features.

The Office Action rejected claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Katagiri in view of EP '979, and further in view of Lu, U.S. Patent No. 6,018,847. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Dependent claim 7 is allowable over Katagiri and EP '979 at least for the reasons discussed above with respect to independent claim 1, from which it depends, as well as for its added features. Lu fails to overcome the deficiencies of Katagiri and EP '979, as it is merely cited as allegedly teaching a guiding protuberance or guiding portion. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 7 over Katagiri, EP '979, and Lu should be withdrawn.

The Office Action rejected claims 10-19 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Katagiri in view of Lu, and rejected claim 20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Katagiri, EP '979, and Lu. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Reply to Office Action dated June 15, 2006

Independent claims 10 and 15 have been amended to recite a cylindrical spacer mounted around a contact plane between the elastic member and the rotational shaft, for preventing direct contact of the elastic member with the rotational shaft and reducing noise and abrasion accordingly, and independent claim 15 has been further amended to recite a plate shaped spacer inserted between the tightening planes, for supporting force exerted on the frictional member. Katagiri fails to disclose or suggest at least the claimed cylindrical spacer. Further, Lu does not disclose or suggest at least the claimed cylindrical spacer. That is, in paragraph 12 of the Office Action, the Office Action corresponds the claimed cylindrical spacer to element 20 of Lu. Referring, for example, to the exemplary embodiment shown in Figures 1-5 of the present application and the corresponding disclosure, the cylindrical spacers are designated by reference numerals 50a, 50b. Although sleeve 20 disclosed by Lu might seem to be similar to the cylindrical spacer 50a, 50b, since sleeve 20 maintains the position of the spring 70, they are totally different from each other in that sleeve 20 disclosed by Lu couples with pivot 10 to pivotally support carrier 50, whereas cylindrical spacers 50a, 50b are used to make the hinge structure operates smoothly. See page 6, lines 17-20 of the present application. Further, sleeve 20 is clearly not a spacer.

Further, as acknowledged by the Office Action, Katagiri fails to disclose or suggest the claimed plate shaped spacer. Furthermore, as discussed above, EP '979 also fails to disclose or suggest at least the claimed plate shaped spacer.

Accordingly, the rejection of independents claim 10 and 15 should be withdrawn. Dependent claims 11-12, 14, 16-17, and 19 are allowable over the applied prior art at least for

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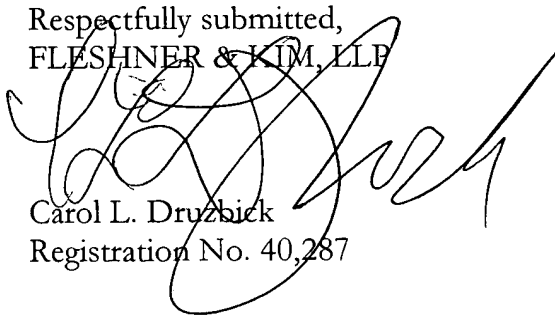
Reply to Office Action dated June 15, 2006

the reasons discussed above with respect to independent claims 10 and 15, from which they respectively depend, as well as for their added features.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited. If the Examiner believes that any additional changes would place the application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this, concurrent and future replies, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 16-0607 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,  
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